

McKinley "Muddy Waters" Morganfield

McKinley Morganfield, aka Muddy Waters - *The King of the Blues*, was born on April 4, 1915 in Rolling Fork, Mississippi. His mother died when he was three years old and Muddy was raised by his grandmother in Clarksdale.

There are two different versions of how he got the name Muddy Waters. Some say that he got the name from playing in a muddy creek on the plantation where he lived, others say that he got the name from his early years when he caught and sold fish for a living. However, he came by that moniker, it is the name he will be forever known as. (Muddy preferred to call himself "*Gut Singer*.")

Muddy grew up listening to and learning from the rich Delta sounds of such Bluesmen as Son House and Robert Johnson and at the age of 17 he took up the guitar. Muddy soon learned the bottleneck style and the slide rhythms of the Delta guitar. He also developed a powerful and expressive voice.

In 1941 Alan Lomax and a *Library of Congress* team visited the area in search of new talent to record for the library's archives. He heard Muddy Waters playing and realized he had found a very talented newcomer. Lomax recorded Muddy's version of "I Be's Troubled" and returned the following summer to record him once again. "I Be's Troubled" was later recorded on the Aristocrat label and became a big hit.

In 1943 Muddy Waters left Mississippi for Chicago, Illinois. At first, he worked odd jobs by day and entertained at local clubs during the evenings. His first recorded single, I Can't Be Satisfied and I Feel Like Going Home was released by Aristocrat in 1948 and became an immediate hit.

Popular with black audiences for years Muddy Waters' music eventually crossed racial lines. His tune, *Rollin' Stone* inspired the name of the English band, *The Rolling Stones*. The words were also the inspiration for Bob Dylan's *Like a Rolling Stone*. Some of his other hits are: *Got My Mojo Working'*, *Funky Butt*, *She Moves Me*, and *The Blues Had a Baby and They Named It Rock 'n' Roll*.

In 1953 Muddy teamed with Otis Spann, who played piano with him for the next sixteen years. By the late fifties, Rock and Roll had begun to replace Rhythm and Blues and Muddy's last top of the chart hit was *Close to You* released in 1958.

After touring overseas for a few years during the seventies, Muddy cut the album, *Hard Again* for Blue Sky Records. Muddy and his group cut three more albums for Blue Sky before he died on April 30, 1983.

[*Encyclopedia Britannica*](#)

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